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FROM USMISSION UNESCO PARIS

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E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [UNESCO](#) [AORC](#) [UNGA](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [SOCI](#) [EAID](#)  
SUBJECT: UNESCO DG REACTS TO HIGH-LEVEL PANEL REPORT "DELIVERING AS ONE": "WE'RE READY TO TEST PILOT OFFICES"

REFS: A) 06 State 187687 B) Paris 424

11. This is a guidance request, see para 4.

12. Summary: After some initial hesitation, UNESCO's Director General Matsuura continues to engage member states on the results of the UN high level panel report "Delivering as One." At a March 9 question and answer session with member states, the DG stressed UNESCO's proactive response to the "one country" approach, including UNESCO's determination to participate in all eight of the pilot UN country offices. He also reported on UNESCO's continuing engagement in shaping the ongoing UN reform dialogue: his own recent visit to New York, where he met with UN SecGen Ban, and the March 7 meeting he hosted that brought together heads of the five large specialized agencies (ILO, FAO, UNIDO, and WHO). Matsuura also announced that UNESCO is a member of an informal "one UN" support group that will next meet on April 19 in Geneva. Despite this pro-active approach, Matsuura did note that the High-Level panel report must go through the "intergovernmental stage," including action by the UNGA. The DG explained that the mandate for work on the "one UN" at country level is derived from the 2004 Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review (TCPR) resolution of the UNGA.

13. Matsuura took pains to outline UNESCO's current role in areas covered by the report of the High-Level Panel, citing the Education

for All (EFA) Global Action Plan as a "compelling example of 'delivering as one'", while stressing that culture, an element of UNESCO's mandate, needs to be integrated into national development plans. To strengthen UNESCO's role in humanitarian assistance, Matsuura said that he would seek membership in the Executive Committee for Humanitarian Affairs. On environmental governance, Matsuura cautioned, "it would be an error to assume that the role of more than 25 agencies should be merged into a single program or organization." During the question and answer session, some member states - including Norway, Switzerland, and Afghanistan - expressed approval of the UNESCO DG's pro-active stance in implementing the "one UN" proposals at the country level. But some developing nations advocated caution, led by India, who recalled reticence expressed by the G-77 and China in other UN fora (paras 10-13). Queried on funding for the "One UN" pilot offices, the DG reported, "this element needs to be examined with a lot of attention, because the details are not yet established."

14. Comment: Perhaps the reservations expressed by the UNESCO DG and member states at this session can inform the USG strategy on UN reform. The DG stressed in his speech that the panel's findings have not been officially adopted. But UNESCO's reaction to the "Delivering as One" proposals, as described by DG Matsuura, seems a positive development, as it includes more pro-active engagement with other UN agencies and a more strategic approach to country-level planning. Post requests additional guidance on the High-Level Panel Recommendations as they pertain to specialized agencies in order to prepare for the debate on UNESCO's new Medium-Term Strategy at UNESCO's April 10-26 Executive Board. End summary and comment.

15. Director General Matsuura began his speech by "welcoming and endorsing" the main thrust of the report of the high-level panel. The DG outlined UNESCO's "active engagement" in the reform process. The preceding week, Matsuura himself visited New York, where he met with UN SecGen Ban, UN Deputy Secretary General Migiro and UNDP Administrator and undg Chair Dervis, among others. On March 7, he hosted a meeting at UNESCO of the heads of the five large specialized agencies (ILO, FAO, UNIDO, and WHO) to identify the best way to work together to advance the reform process, and ensure that the specialized agencies are able to "bring their unique competencies to bear in support of national development." Matsuura noted, though, that the "Delivering as One" report now needs to go through the intergovernmental stage, notably consideration and action by the UNGA; he reported that UN SecGen Ban had told him that he would present his own views later this month.

16. The DG then stressed at length UNESCO's direct involvement in the three areas covered by the report: development, humanitarian assistance, and the environment. UNESCO is the international coordinator of the Education for All (EFA). UNESCO Education Support Strategies (UNESS) could serve as the basis for common country planning documents for UN agencies involved in education. The EFA has also led development of the EFA Global Action plan -- in partnership with UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, and the World Bank -- "a compelling example of 'delivering as one'". Matsuura reported that he and undg Chair Dervish had agreed that the EFA Global Action Plan would be sent to resident coordinators of local UN teams for implementation via joint country program exercises. Matsuura stressed the need for World Bank involvement in common country action on EFA.

17. Asserting that "the significance of culture has not always been recognized by UNESCO's partners" and expressing disappointment that culture had not been included in model UNDAF development plans, the DG pledged that UNESCO will promote its inclusion in country plans. He highlighted the recently announced Spanish fund for the achievement of the MDGs as a potential vehicle for this. (Comment: UNESCO continues to push the role of culture in development though it has little to show for it.)

18. On Humanitarian assistance, the DG underlined UNESCO's emphasis on the "human and institutional, rather than the physical, aspects of reconstruction," saying this would help ensure more coherent transition strategies from humanitarian assistance to reconstruction in post conflict or post-disaster situations. He also cited the Tsunami Early Warning System as an example of UNESCO's efforts to

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promote disaster prevention. To enhance its role in humanitarian assistance, UNESCO will seek membership in the Executive Committee for Humanitarian Affairs (ECHA). Regarding environmental sustainability, Matsuura endorsed the panel's recommendation for strengthened environmental governance, but said that "much more thorough analysis" is needed. He stressed that "it would be an error to assume that the role of more than 25 agencies should be merged into a single program or organization." (Comment: In this, the DG is doubtless concerned about the future roles of the UNESCO's Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission, International Hydrological Program, and Man and Biosphere Program. End Comment.)

DG on One UN at Country Level: "We're There!"

¶9. On establishing "One UN" offices at country level, DG Matsuura reported that basic agreement on next steps was reached at the joint UNDG management and program group retreat in New York at the end of January. UNESCO is committed to taking part in all 8 pilot offices, and the DG has already sent a mission to Viet Nam, a pilot country. DG Matsuura said that he was heartened by the "growing consensus at top decision-making levels" regarding the need for "flexibility", as opposed to "earlier rigidity". He then outlined the four aspects of the "One UN" concept, commenting as follows: one leader ("firewalled" from the dual identity of UNDP resident representative); one program; one budgetary framework (to identify funding gaps, to which the bilateral donor community could contribute via country-level coherence funds); one office (entailing a merger of business practices, but not necessarily a joint headquarters).

¶10. In DG Matsuura's view, defining a common program to support national development goals will be the core task for the UN system; it will replace the UNDAF approach of "simply accumulating individual agency deliverables." Each organization must be able to contribute to the implementation of the "One Program" at country level, regardless of the funds it can commit, Matsuura stressed; this will be facilitated by the revision of UNDAF guidelines spelling out the obligations of resident coordinators to integrate the expertise of specialized agencies. Pilots must be assessed at the end of this year before the initiative is "scaled up." Matsuura announced that UNESCO is part of the "select group" of ten UNDG members that will comprise the informal support group on the "One UN." The group recently held its first meeting, and will meet again on April 19 in Geneva.

¶11. Matsuura reported that he had decided to advance the review of UNESCO's decentralization strategy, reviving the Task Force under the leadership of DDG Barbosa. Key to this will be a new accountability framework for field operations, as well as policy guidance regarding UNESCO's substantive inputs to country planning exercises. Modalities of UNESCO action in the three pilot countries where UNESCO is not resident are still TBD. The Decentralization Task Force works closely with UNESCO's working group on UN reform, chaired by Elizabeth Longworth, the DG's chief of staff. DG Matsuura concluded by stressing that the "One UN" approach was of central concern when the secretariat prepared the new draft Medium Term Strategy (2008-13) and Program and Budget (2008-9).

Reaction of Member States: G-77 and China "Cautious"

¶12. DG Matsuura then fielded questions from a packed house, with many Ambassadors present. Norway, Afghanistan and Switzerland praised the DG for his pro-active response, with Afghanistan asking what developing countries not chosen as one of the eight pilots but in need of more coordinated assistance from the UN might do. In response to Norway's request for the DG's assessment of the reaction to the "Delivering as One" report, the DG conceded that there are many stakeholders and they are not completely united. That said, the five key specialized agencies have been able to arrive at a common position. At first, the DG had some concern about the WHO -- because they had said at one point that they could not join the pilot effort in Viet Nam, given the "rigid" model advanced at the beginning -- but the new WHO DG is taking a more positive stance. The DG expressed optimism regarding the degree of UN-wide consensus, including on the part of specialized agencies. But he also expressed concern about the "cautious attitude" of the

chair of the G-77 and Pakistan group in New York; while the Pakistani Ambassador is not negative, he is cautious procedurally, advocating waiting until the UNGA adopts a resolution. But preparations for the one-country offices will take time; and the 2004 Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review (TCPR) resolution of the UNGA can provide the necessary mandate. What is key is that developing countries believe that the "one UN" approach is beneficial. It is important to create a visible success, particularly in the five countries where UNESCO has field offices.

¶13. The Indian Ambassador also noted the "cautious approach" of the G-77 and China to the report of the high-level panel. The Indian Ambassador reported that she had attended the February 26-27 meeting in Rome of the chairmen of G-77 and China chapters, chaired by Pakistan Ambassador to the UN Munir Akram. At that meeting, the following reservations were expressed: the pilots should be voluntary, led by national governments, and take into account national needs. Any system-wide change in funding or organization would be pre-mature, as would be expansion of the pilot experimental models without consideration of the results. The Indian Ambassador noted that Ambassador Akram sent a letter to Secgen Ban urging him to avoid "precipitate action" before necessary intergovernmental consultation. DG Matsuura responded that while in New York, he had tried unsuccessfully to speak with Ambassador Akram; but he had been able to probe the Secretary General on his reaction. DG Matsuura expressed the hope that Ban would give his position on the "Delivering as One" soon, and that this will be discussed at the UNGA so as to establish a common position. The "One UN" at the country level will proceed in the meantime; a good number of enthusiastic developing countries want to implement these proposals. Matsuura also described the panel's recommendations on women as "not very ambitious", entailing the establishment of a new office. But Ki-Moon had confided to him that there is some resistance even on this; Ki-Moon believes that this new office is needed.

¶14. The Moroccan Ambassador -- a purported candidate for the post of DG to succeed Matsuura in 2009 -- was eager to defend UNESCO's interests. She asserted that the last information session on the "Delivering as One" proposals left some at UNESCO "frightened". Regarding issues within UNESCO's mandate that are addressed by the report, including water and gender -- who will evaluate the performance of each agency? According to the proposed scheme, the budget will be based on results. UNESCO risks losing its soul. DG Matsuura responded that while the "One UN" approach may lead to less visibility for UNESCO, it will result in more of a team effort by the UN as a whole. The budget frameworks for the "One UN" pilot offices do not represent a sole budget; UNESCO will not make financial contributions to a general budget. This detail needs to be examined with a lot of attention, because the details are not established. UNESCO will be accountable to member states via the implementation of projects financed by UNESCO. UNESCO staff will direct the UNESCO office and implement UNESCO projects under the direction of the regional coordinator. The precise model adopted will depend on the country.

¶15. Nigeria evoked a series of challenges: defining the nature of the "one country" coordinator; persuading member states to be "master of programs"; and stagnant funding for many UN organizations. He asked: "From now on, programs will not be included in the budget absent a link to performance; but who evaluates performance?" Gabon, taking a constructive stance, noted "mistrust", but also "the need to reestablish confidence." She stressed the need for flexibility as well as the importance of involving Bretton Woods Organizations, given their involvement in structural readjustment plans. Regarding the context posed by the ongoing preparation of UNESCO's draft medium term strategy (2008-13) and program and budget (2008-2009), the Gabonese Ambassador invited the DG to brief the Africa group in more detail, given the fact that "Africa is a priority for the UN."

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